

# Health Career Access Program- FAQs

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## What is the Health Career Access Program (HCAP)?

The Health Careers Access Program (HCAP) is designed to increase the Health Care Assistant workforce in B.C. The HCAP employment, education and training program will take up to 18 months to complete. HCAP provides an opportunity for individuals to begin employment as Health Care Support Workers (HCSWs) and receive paid employer-sponsored training leading to a provincially recognized Health Care Assistant (HCA) credential.

HCAP will help meet several high-priority goals in the B.C. Health Sector and in the province more generally:

- Reduce the barriers to entry into health care careers by providing applicants with an opportunity to train to become HCAs while receiving a guaranteed income.
- Increase staffing of health care assistants in the North to support resident's long-term care and assisted living sites throughout Northern BC.
- Support the COVID-19 response, in the North, at long-term care and assisted living sites providing additional staff to support

**Please note: All successful program applicants must start as a health care support worker before advancing to a health care assistant position upon completion of their health care assistant education requirements.**

## What is a Health Care Support Worker?

Health Care Support Workers (HCSW) are supervised by registered nurses and other regulated health care professionals. HCSWs provide a variety of important non-clinical, non-direct care supports to patients and residents.

Typical duties include:

- Establishing a caring relationship with residents and their families
- Providing support and assistance with recreational activities
- Assisting and directing visitors
- Restocking supplies
- Performing housekeeping tasks
- Providing support and assistance at mealtimes

Health care support workers receive a starting annual salary of approximately \$39,000, including a supporting fund while you are attending their HCA program as scheduled education.

Upon hire to Northern Health as a HCSW, there may be several months where the HCSW works at a facility before beginning to attend school.

## **What is a Health Care Assistant?**

Health Care Assistants provide personal care in a variety of health care settings including acute care hospitals, assisted living facilities, group homes, long-term care and community care. They are supervised by Registered Nurses and other regulated health care professionals and follow established care plans to provide personal care such as bathing, grooming, dressing, assisting with meals and oral hygiene.

Other duties include:

- Helping in the delivery of nursing care, including taking temperature, pulse and respiration readings
- Documenting information on a patient chart
- Responding to call bells/alarms in hospital settings
- Observing and monitoring patient progress, symptoms and behavioural changes and report significant observations
- Utilizing mechanical aides (specialty beds, lifts, wheelchairs and stretchers) to transport patients
- Providing assistance with positioning, lifting and/or transferring patients using established lifting/safety techniques
- Maintaining a clean and safe environment for patients and staff

On average, full certified and registered Health Care Assistants earn approximately \$45,091 a year.

## **How long is the HCAP program?**

The Health Career Access Program incorporates both employment as a Health Care Support Worker (HCSW) while at the same time completing a Health Care Assistant program at a local college. The schooling portion can take up to 10 months to complete and overall, the whole HCAP program (school and workplace experience) may take up to 18 months.

After graduation from college, the Health Care Support Worker will be required to sign a 12-month return of service agreement in the community they trained in, in exchange for the education provided.

## Who is eligible to apply to the Health Career Access Program?

Anyone who meets the requirements for the Health Care Support Worker (HCSW) qualifications (listed below) is invited to apply. This includes Northern Health employees (internal staff) who may be working in non-direct care roles, internationally educated nurses who have not had their qualifications recognized, and individuals with no health sector experience.

Applicants must also ensure they meet their relevant post-secondary schools Health Care Assistant program requirements. Short listed candidates will be contact and informed of these requirements.

### Education

- Grade 10, including the successful completion of English 10, or equivalency
- For guidance on the English Language Competency Requirement please visit this link

### Skills

- Ability to communicate effectively, both verbally and in writing
- Ability to deal with other effectively
- Ability to organize work
- Physical ability to carry out the duties of the position
- Ability to operate related equipment

## How do I apply to HCAP program if I am a Northern Health employee?

**Step 1:** Apply to a Health Care Support Worker position on [Northern Health's internal employment page](#). Once you receive and accept your offer of employment, work and training will begin.

**Step 2:** Complete basic training and onboarding provided by Northern Health. You will be paid for your time and course fees are covered.

**Step 3:** Become a Health Care Assistant! After you complete basic training and pass a probationary work period, you enter a structured education program to become a health care assistant that you complete while you are working.

**\*If internal postings are closed, internal applicants can apply to external postings. Please follow the external application process below.**

## How do I apply to the program if I don't work for Northern Health?

Apply to a Health Care Support Worker position at [Northern Health's external employment page](#). **Look under the job category "Support services".**

## **If no internal or external postings are up, can I still apply?**

Yes. Please complete an [expression of interest form](#).

## **What is the Return to Service Agreement?**

All HCAP applicants are required to sign a 12-month return to service agreement. By signing, applicants are agreeing to work as a Health Care Assistant for one year upon completion of the program at the site they were hired at and actively seeking regular employment at that site. More information will be provided to short-listed candidates.

## **How much does it cost?**

Successful applicants to the HCAP will be paid for all hours worked and a supporting fund while taking college classes, and will also receive provincial funds to cover the cost for the Health Care Assistant program including tuition, mandatory fees and books.

There will be some supplies you will need to provide to get started:

1. A computer and software (i.e. email, office programs, MS Word)
2. Computer camera and speakers and
3. Adequate Internet access

So that you can attend virtual classes with and complete your homework assignments for the college you are attending. If you are living in a rural setting, you may need to talk to the College to determine if your internet speed is adequate.

## **What supplies and costs are covered for me as a student?**

Your tuition and necessary books and fees are covered. A small stipend is available if you apply for it to cover other costs related to Food Safe and First Aide/CPR course fees. For more information on the stipend please review “How much is the pre-requisite support fund (stipend) and how do I apply for it?” below.

Students are expected to bear the costs of fuel/mileage to and from school, including parking expenses.

For some students from smaller remote communities who are required to travel to a larger community for clinical labs and clinical placements, your travel and accommodation costs will be covered by Northern Health under specific conditions. You will be given specific information on this when you are accepted into the college portion of this program.

## **What if I don't have Food Safe or CPR when I apply to the program?**

Food Safe and CPR will not be required to be completed before you apply to the HCAP program. Health Match BC will cover the cost for your Food Safe and CPR requirements after you apply to the program. Students are responsible for arranging and completing these course outside of the program. Short-listed candidates will be contacted with further information.

## **How do I complete the pre-requisites course and other hiring requirements? How is it paid for? Do I take it outside of work or school? As part of work? As part of school?**

Students should arrange First Aid, CPR or Food Safe training through the links in the [Provincial online orientation](#). They should be scheduling this training as soon as they can get into the next course, but it should not impact their working component or going into the next education component.

The cost of First Aid, CPR or Food Safe will be covered. Refer to pre-requisite support fund below.

**Immunizations and Tuberculosis (TB) testing:** you are to make appointments for TB testing and getting updated vaccinations as soon as you know you are hired into a position. This testing and vaccinations are necessary for both your schooling and employment.

**Completion of Food Safe and First Aide/CPR certificates** are needed before you start your schooling at the colleges. Once you have been hired into a position, you can begin to make arrangements to take these course. Food Safe certification is done online. You may need to look for First Aide/CPR courses that are offered in your community and book them as soon as possible. You may be already working at your facility by this the time the course is available; discuss this with your hiring manager to let them know the dates you arranged.

## **Where can I sign up for CPR training?**

You can register for CPR training through the [Canadian RedCross](#).

## **Where can I sign up for First Aide?**

Please review and select from [WorkSafeBC's list of first aid training providers](#).

## **Where can I sign up for Food Safe?**

You can register for the online Food Safe course [here](#).

## **Where can I go to get more information on the immunizations I need?**

Please review the [list of immunizations](#) for Health Care Workers in BC.

## **How much is the pre-requisite support fund (stipend) and how do I apply for it?**

Once an applicant is accepted into the HCAP program a one-time support fund (stipend) amount of \$342 is available to support successful applicants with any costs related to their application to the program, including the completion of pre-requisite courses (Food Safe, Standard First Aid, English Proficiency testing).

This stipend is a fixed amount and not dependent on the type, number, or costs of the pre-requisites required by the applicant. Applicants who are required, as part of his/her enrollment to the HCAP program, to complete an English Language Proficiency Test may be eligible for additional funding.

To qualify applicants must:

- Submit proof of enrollment into HCAP (e.g., a conditional HCSW offer letter pending completion of the prerequisite courses, or a letter from the hiring manager confirming selection into the program).
- Complete and submit an [HCAP Pre-Requisite Stipend Application Form](#) with all supporting documents to the Choose2Care team at Health Match BC.
- Have a valid Social Insurance Number (SIN) as of the date the funds are issued to be eligible to receive the stipend from Health Match BC / HEABC.

## **If you are missing pre-requisites when applying to the health care assistant program at your post-secondary institution (college)?**

If you are missing pre-requisites needed to get into the health care assistant program (i.e. Math or English or other equivalency, you might be required to write a placement test as part of your admission requirements. Check with Admissions, Learning Support Centre, or the Testing Centre at your college to see if they can provide you with preparation information and materials for the test.

## **Can I take the program part time?**

No. As an HCSW you are a full-time employee, and the HCA program requires a full-time commitment during the education time allotted to employees to complete it.

## **Do I have to work shifts as a Health Care Support Worker? Does that include overnight shifts when I have school the next day?**

Yes, you will work shifts as an HCSW, usually daytime and evening. Because the HCSW positions are supernumerary (that means, above baseline staffing compliments), your supervisor will ensure you are not scheduled for an overnight shift prior to a school day.

## **What is the schedule for the education, work and clinical placements for the HCSW position?**

Each HCSW will attend both classroom hours and facility work hours each week. The combined hours for both attendance in classroom and at the facility will never exceed full time hours (i.e. less than 40 hours/week). There is of course, a commitment for students to complete homework and this may take up additional time on evenings/weekends for some students.

## **How do I schedule and take my accumulated vacation time?**

While undergoing the education and working component of the program, you are only eligible to take vacation time during the working component days and not during your education component. Discuss with your manager and complete [Leave Request Form](#).

## **What will my college school schedule look like?**

This depends on which community/region of Northern Health you are taking the college program with and how the college is scheduling their program.

Some colleges schedule in full week blocks (i.e. 4 week Monday to Friday in school and 2 weeks in the workplace as a HCSW), or as mentioned earlier, other week to week schedules.

Each of the college models allows time to complete assignments, study, contact instructors etc. within their schedule. However, you will likely need to put in additional time for studying and completing assignments throughout the program to ensure you are successfully.

You will receive your college schedule by your facility Hiring Manager. This schedule will be available within 2 months of college start dates for each cohort.

There is no overtime related to education time for HCSWs.

## **Why am I required to sign a waiver?**

You are required to sign waivers with both Northern Health and the college in which you complete the Health Care Assistant (HCA) certificate program to allow Northern Health as the sponsor access to your academic information, including being notified by HCA instructors if you are starting to struggle with the program. This ensures you are aware at all times, of how you are doing and allows NH to identify possible supports to help you successfully complete the HCA Certificate program.

## **Will there be homework?**

Yes. There will be a series of assignments and tests required for you to complete the Health Care Assistant Program. You will need to develop good time management skills to manage both the HCA program and HCSW work schedules and workloads.

## **Do I need to live in the location of the position I am applying for?**

Yes. You need to be available full time in the site in which you have a HCSW position, and are expected to apply for an HCA position at the site once you completed the program and are registered with the provincial body.

You need to attend the PSI campus assigned to the work site.

You may need to travel to clinical placements and possibly skills labs within Northern Health to complete your education program. Travel expenses will be covered as per the NH Travel Reimbursement policy for those who need to travel out of town for clinical placements and skills labs.

## **How do my benefits work now that I am an HCSW or if I am a new hire?**

Your terms and conditions of your benefits are outlined in your letter of offer.

## **What do I do once I successfully complete the HCAP program?**

You will take all steps necessary to become registered Health Care Aide in the BC Care Aide Registry and apply for a HCA position at your primary work site. Short listed candidates will be provided more information through their return-to-service agreements.

## **What happens if I don't complete the Health Care Assistant Certificate Program?**

If you are an internal candidate, that is, were a NH employee whom applied for a posting, the term of the HCSW position will end and Northern Health will return you to your pre-program position/status.

If you are an external candidate, that is, your were hired outside of NH, you will be asked to vacate your HCSW position, but will have the opportunity to apply on other NH jobs for which you are qualified

## **Who do I contact with additional questions?**

Please email [HCAP@northernhealth.ca](mailto:HCAP@northernhealth.ca).